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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SW](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SWEDEN: BILDT CALLS FOR GREATER EU INVOLVEMENT IN
IRAQ

REF: STOCKHOLM 212

Classified By: Polcouns Casey Christensen, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (u) Making reference to participation by key countries in the upcoming conference on the future of Iraq, Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said the EU and Sweden should, once the security situation improves, make greater contributions toward stabilizing Iraq and supporting the development of a successful, functioning state. In an article in Dagens Nyheter (full translation of the article emailed to EUR/NB), Bildt said that Sweden and Europe have a very strong interest in developing a democratic and stable Iraq. He warned of the risk of civil war, ethnic persecution, and the risk of spreading conflict in the region if this does not happen. Bildt said the stream of Iraqi asylum seekers would also increase substantially -- noting that last year 9,000 Iraqis, or half of all Iraqis headed to Europe, sought asylum in Sweden (reftel).

¶2. (u) Bildt took a different view of the international intervention in Iraq than his predecessors, noting that "those who fundamentally condemned what happened must realize that today's international presence in Iraq is based upon a request from the Iraqi government and a decision of the UN Security Council, most recently in resolution 1723" He said that "it is of great interest to Sweden and the rest of Europe that Iraq become a democratic, stable and unified country. No country would remain unaffected if Iraq heads toward a more open civil war, with even larger refugee flows, ethnic persecution and mounting hostility in the region." He urged "a constructive contribution to a better future" for Iraq. Bildt added that "It is easy to say that we, as well as the EU, should have done more. The future for nation building in Iraq will affect the rest of the region -- and also European security. If the security situation in Iraq improves, we should obviously be prepared, not least of all within the EU, to discuss future contribution."

Comment

¶3. (c) Bildt has been criticized in the media and by rival politicians recently on a number of fronts: his interests to energy companies with ties to Russia's proposed Baltic Sea pipeline (Vostok Nafta) or Sudan (Lundin Oil); his role on the International Advisory Council of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq; and his popular blogs in English (<http://bildt.blogspot.com>) and Swedish (<http://carlbildt.wordpress.com>). Bildt has weathered the storms thus far. A prosecutor declined to proceed against him on the Vostok Nafta matter, and Bildt has denied any wrong doing on any front. In connection with the blogs, he has defended such openness as the wave of the future and wryly noted that his Swedish blog had ten times as many visits on February 28 as the Social Democrat youth movement has members.

14. (c) Despite his critics, he enjoys considerable latitude in terms of foreign policy. His views on Iraq are much more forward-leaning than those of his predecessors. Our contacts in the MFA and elsewhere in the government give him great deference, but he has become a kind of lightning rod for political opponents of the current government. It is significant, however, that his response to criticism of his role in connection with the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq has been to urge a greater Swedish and EU role in building the Iraqi nation.

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